

-3-

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1. (Currently Amended) A method of processing a stream of data packets in a packet switch having one or more interface devices for servicing an input point, a first output point and a second output point of the switch, said method comprising the steps of:

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- (a) configuring the device servicing the input point to attach overhead associated with a point-to-point connection to packets received at the input point in order to route the packets to the first output point;
 - (b) configuring the device servicing the first output point to receive and process the packets having the point-to-point overhead attached thereto;
 - (c) configuring the device servicing the second output point to receive and process packets having overhead attached thereto which is associated with a point-to-multipoint connection for routing packets from the input point to the first output point and from the input point to the second output point;
 - (d) configuring the device servicing the first output point to additionally receive and process packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead attached thereto, wherein the configuration of the device servicing the first output point that results from step (b) remains unchanged; and
 - (e) only after step (d) is completed, configuring the device servicing the input point to attach the point-to-multipoint overhead to packets received at the input point ~~only after step (d) is completed~~ instead of attaching said overhead associated with said point-to-point connection.

thereby converting a point-to-point packet flow into a point-to-multipoint packet flow without disrupting the point-to-point packet flow.

Claim 2. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising the steps of:

-4-

- (f) configuring the device servicing the second output point to stop receiving and processing packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead;
- (g) configuring the device servicing the input point to attach the point-to-point overhead to packets received at the input point; and
- (h) configuring the device servicing the first output point to stop receiving and processing packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead only after step (g) is completed,

thereby terminating the flow of packets to the second output point without disrupting the flow of packets to the first output point.

Claim 3. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein each switch point is referenced by at least an address of the interface device within the switch and a virtual path identifier.

Claim 4. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein the point-to-point overhead comprises a unique interface device address.

B 1
Claim 5. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein the point-to-multipoint overhead comprises a multicast interface card address referencing a plurality of interface cards.

Claim 6. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 3, wherein the point-to-point overhead and the point-to-multipoint overhead comprise identical bitmaps, wherein the setting of a single bit identifies a point-to-point connection and the setting of plural bits identifies a point-to-multipoint connection.

Claim 7. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 2, wherein said packet is a fixed-length cell.

Claim 8. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 7, wherein said packet switch is a connection-oriented switch.

Claim 9. (Currently Amended) A method for converting a point-to-point packet flow from a first point to a second point in a packet switch into a point-to-multipoint packet flow from said first point to said second point and from said first point to a third point in said packet switch without disrupting said point-to-point packet flow, wherein said switch comprises one or more

McCarthy Tétrault LLP TDO-RED #8230295 v. DOC

-5-

interface devices, connected to an internal switch bus, for servicing said first, second and third points, said method comprising the steps of:

- 2
- (a) configuring the device servicing said third point to retrieve from said bus packets addressed thereto which use a multicast addressing scheme for routing packets from said first point to said second point and from said first point to said third point;
 - (b) configuring the device servicing said second point to additionally retrieve from said bus the multicast packets, wherein the device servicing the second point maintains an existing configuration to retrieve, from said bus, packets forming part of said point-to-point packet flow and which use a unicast addressing scheme; and
 - (c) only after step (b) is completed, configuring the device servicing said first point to address packets received at said first point to said second and third points using said multicast addressing scheme ~~after step (b) is completed~~.

Claim 10. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 9, further comprising the steps of:

- (d) configuring the device servicing the third point to stop retrieving said multicast packets;
- (e) configuring the device servicing the first point to address packets received thereat only to the second point; and
- (f) only after step (e) is completed, configuring the device servicing the second point to stop retrieving said multicast packets ~~only after step (e) is completed~~,

thereby terminating the flow of packets to said third point without disrupting the flow of packets to said second point.

Claim 11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the unicast addressing scheme comprises a unique interface card address.

Claim 12. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the multicast addressing scheme comprises a multicast interface card address referencing a plurality of interface cards.

- 6 -

Claim 13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein the unicast addressing scheme and the multicast addressing scheme comprise identical bitmaps, wherein the setting of a single bit identifies a point-to-point connection and the setting of plural bits identifies a point-to-multipoint connection.

Claim 14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10, wherein said packet is a fixed-length cell.

Claim 15. (Currently Amended) A method of processing a stream of data packets in a packet switch arriving at an input point thereof, said method comprising the steps of:

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- (a) attaching overhead associated with a point-to-point connection to packets received at the input point in order to route the packets to a first output point;
 - (b) receiving and processing the packets having the point-to-point overhead attached thereto at the first output point;
 - (c) configuring a device servicing the first output point to additionally receive and process packets having overhead attached thereto which is associated with a point-to-multipoint connection for routing packets from the input point to the first output point and from the input point to a second output point, wherein the device servicing the first output point maintains an existing configuration to receive and process packets having the point-to-point overhead attached thereto;
 - (d) only after step (c) is completed attaching the point-to-multipoint overhead to packets received at the input point ~~only after step (c) is completed~~; and
 - (e) receiving and processing the packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead attached thereto at the second output point,

thereby converting a continuous point-to-point packet flow into a point-to-multipoint packet flow without disrupting the point-to-point packet flow.

Claim 16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the point-to-point overhead comprises a unique interface card address.

Claim 17. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the point-to-multipoint overhead comprises a multicast interface card address referencing a plurality of interface cards.

McCarthy Tétrault LLP TDO-REID #8230295 v. DDC

- 7 -

Claim 18. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, wherein the point-to-point overhead and the point-to-multipoint overhead comprise identical bitmaps, wherein the setting of a single bit identifies a point-to-point connection and the setting of plural bits identifies a point-to-multipoint connection.

Claim 19. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the steps of:

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- (f) terminating the reception and processing of packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead at the second output point;
 - (g) attaching the point-to-point overhead to packets received at the input point; and
 - (h) terminating the reception and processing of packets having the point-to-multipoint overhead at the first output point only after step (g) is completed,

thereby terminating the flow of packets to the second output point without disrupting the flow of packets to the first output point.

Claim 20. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein each switch point is referenced by at least an address of an interface card within the switch and a virtual path identifier.

Claim 21. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the point-to-point overhead comprises a unique interface card address.

Claim 22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the point-to-multipoint overhead comprises a multicast interface card address referencing a plurality of interface cards.

Claim 23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the point-to-point overhead and the point-to-multipoint overhead comprise identical bitmaps, wherein the setting of a single bit identifies a point-to-point connection and the setting of plural bits identifies a point-to-multipoint connection.

Claim 24. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the packet is a fixed-length cell.